

Ambassador Mull's Remarks at the Wujek Mine Commemoration

December 16, 2014

Mayor Krupa, Governor Litwa and Marshal Saługa, and the distinguished family members of the victims who lost their lives on this day 33 years ago in a criminal attack on the right of people to be free...

Thank you for inviting me to join with you and the Śląskie Centrum Wolności i Solidarności on this solemn day of remembrance. So much has happened since that terrible night when your fathers, sons and husbands were taken from you. But on that dark night, you knew, and Poland's friends knew, that those who died and sustained injuries did not so in vain. As President Ronald Reagan said a week after this terrible massacre:

When 19th century Polish patriots rose against foreign oppressors, their rallying cry was, "For our freedom and yours." Well, that motto still rings true in our time. There is a spirit of solidarity abroad in the world tonight that no physical force can crush. It crosses national boundaries and enters into the hearts of men and women everywhere. In factories, farms, and schools – and yes in mines -- in cities and towns around the globe, we the people of the Free World stand as one with our Polish brothers and sisters. Their cause is ours, and our prayers and hopes go out to them this Christmas.

When General Jaruzelski declared martial law and sent tanks into the streets to chase down and imprison the leaders of Poland's democratic movement, the miners of Wujek immediately responded with a strike that captured the attention of the world. These men did not strike for more pay, though they needed it. They did not strike for better health care, though they needed it. And they did not strike for better work conditions, though they needed them. They went on strike to demand an end to martial law, to demand the release of their friends from imprisonment, and to demand justice for crimes against their human rights. But the forces of ZOMO were not interested in their demands. In bitter cold, they attacked the miners with tear gas, water cannons, and in the end, with the bullets that took the lives of Wujek's heroes.

Today, we pay tribute the victims and their families for sacrificing their lives so that Poland would be free. So that Poland could take its place in the family of the free world, with its security guaranteed in an alliance with the United States through NATO, so that no foreign power or ideology will ever again stop Polish miners, Polish workers, Polish priests, Polish businessmen and Polish students from enjoying the benefits of freedom. Today, we remember and honor their and your sacrifices. And say thank you to those nine brave Poles who gave their lives in the cause of freedom:

Józef Czekalski
Krzysztof Giza
Joachim Gnida
Ryszard Gzik
Bogusław Kopczak
Andrzej Pełka
Jan Stawisiński
Zbigniew Wilk
Zenon Zając

May God rest their souls, comfort their families, and bless a free Poland that will endure forever.